

WHAT NEXT IN AFGHANISTAN ?

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today.

When I last testified before this Subcommittee on February 17, 1988, I emphasized the many factors that would make a military defeat of the Kabul regime difficult. At the same time, I argued that Mikhail Gorbachev recognized the limitations of the Afghan Communist Party and that he was anxious to escape from the futile commitment to Communist domination in Kabul made by his predecessors. This is still the Soviet position as it was spelled out to me in a series of high-level meetings with officials of the Central Committee, the Foreign Ministry and the Defense Ministry during a recent three-week visit to Moscow.

In my view, Gorbachev is prepared to support a peaceful transfer of power in Afghanistan in which President Najibullah's regime would step down coincident with the conclusion of negotiations to establish a broad-based transitional government. Moscow's minimum conditions for such a political settlement are that the Communists not be excluded from the process of establishing a transitional regime; that the process be conducted under independent auspices, free from the control of Pakistani and American intelligence agencies; and that the Communist Party be recognized as a legitimate participant in any future elections to be conducted by a transitional regime. Representation of the Communist Party, as such, in a transitional government is an expendable bargaining demand. While giving up its effort to

ensure Communist dominance, in short, Moscow wants to be able to say that it has preserved an opportunity for the Communists to compete in the power struggles ahead. Indeed, it is important to recognize that the Geneva accords were acceptable to the Soviet Union as a face-saving compromise precisely because they did not require Moscow to abandon its Afghan clients.

The basic dilemma now confronting Moscow and Washington alike is that neither the Kabul regime nor the Peshawar government-in-exile established by Pakistan and the United States represent the majority of Afghans. Neither can serve as the nucleus of a broad-based regime because both bear the stigma of foreign parentage.

The challenge confronting Pakistan, the United States and the Soviet Union is to create new, independent processes of intra-Afghan political dialogue and accommodation that will give equitable representation to the unorganized, voiceless majority in shaping a political settlement. Such processes would swamp both the Communists and the Islamic fundamentalists, who now enjoy a degree of importance out of all proportion to their following. The Secretary General of the United Nations is uniquely positioned to set in motion what would necessarily be a protracted search for a political solution over a period of many months. Until recently, both the United States and Pakistan, focusing on a military victory, have discouraged intervention by the Secretary General. However, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's visit has signalled a new flexibility in Pakistan's posture,

reflected in her Congressional speech calling on the "world community" to rise to the challenge of a political settlement.

Regrettably, the Bush Administration is clinging to its hope of a military victory while seeking to broaden the base of the Peshawar government-in-exile. In my view, this policy is likely to produce inconclusive results both militarily and politically. It is a no-win policy that will entail high costs in bloodshed and devastation as well as the growing alienation of the United States from the majority of Afghans.

The motivation and staying power of the Communist forces have been demonstrated in the Jalalabad fighting. Conceivably, with a large-scale expansion of the front-line Pakistani technical and logistical support now being provided, the resistance forces would be able to use armored vehicles and improve their showing. However, the deep-seated divisions in the resistance make a definitive victory unlikely in the absence of years of training in conventional warfare and a massive escalation of American military aid extending not only to armored vehicles but also to aircraft. More important, even in the event that the Communists are dislodged from Kabul, they would not necessarily stop fighting. Afghanistan would in all probability remain locked in a continuing civil war involving the Communists; Islamic fundamentalist factions backed by Pakistan, the United States and Saudi Arabia; Shia groups backed by Iran; and many of the resistance field commanders, especially those linked to the

powerful tribal groups rooted in the Pushtun ethnic majority, who look to former King Zahir Shah as their spokesman.

II

What should American priorities be in Afghanistan?

1. The United States and the Soviet Union should seek to negotiate a mutually acceptable "negative symmetry" agreement under which both sides would terminate military aid to the Afghan combatants. Originally proposed by the United States in March, 1988, "negative symmetry" was rejected at that time by Moscow. Since Gorbachev's reversal of the Soviet position in November, 1988, however, it is Washington that has rejected the concept. An agreement to terminate weapons aid would be a necessary first step to create a climate conducive to a successful second-stage effort by United Nations Secretary General Perez De Cuellar to promote a broad-based regime.

The Bush Administration has opposed a mutual aid cutoff on the argument that recent Soviet military aid, especially Scud missiles, has created a qualitative imbalance between Kabul and its opponents. However, on a recent trip to Moscow, Soviet spokesmen indicated a readiness to negotiate a withdrawal of the Scud missiles as part of a "negative symmetry" agreement.

2. Once an aid cutoff has been agreed upon, the Afghan combatants would be compelled, for the first time, to focus seriously on possible political compromises. Secretary General Perez De Cuellar should then be encouraged to abide by the November 3, 1988, General Assembly resolution calling on him to promote a broad-based government embracing "all segments" of the

Afghan people. Given strong American support, Prime Minister Bhutto would be able to overcome the continuing opposition to a United Nations role within the Interservices Intelligence Directorate and other elements of the armed forces that have been infiltrated by fundamentalist groups.

The Secretary General could be encouraged to convene a series of national unity conferences, or mini-shuras, perhaps in Geneva, as a prelude to a Loi Jirga or a larger shura. Such mini-shuras could range in size from 60 to 100 participants. No parties would be represented as such. Neither Kabul nor the Peshawar government in exile would be represented as such. However, the invitation list would be designed to provide for representation of all significant political and social forces. To illustrate, out of 100 participants, perhaps 24 could be drawn from the ranks of field commanders, 21 from the seven alliance parties, 15 from Kabul and the balance from the Iran-based resistance groups, tribal and ethnic leaders and prominent former officials. The Kabul representatives could be "good Muslims," i.e. present or former non-Communist officials of the Kabul regime (e.g. Finance Minister Habibullah Tarzi and Vice President Abdul Rahim Hatef) or others such as former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Ahmad Popal now resident in Kabul. If some invitees refuse to attend, the meetings would be held without them.

The mini-shuras could choose an interim government directly, composed of independent, non-parti san figures, as proposed by former U.N. mediator Diego Cordovez in July, 1988, or they could

call a larger gathering for this purpose. For example, Sultan Ghazi, an adviser to former King Zahir Shah, has proposed a detailed procedure for choosing a Loi Jirga. Out of 841 delegates, 195 would be chosen directly by the alliance from its network of party leaders and local commanders. This bloc would be offset by 206 directly elected by the refugees in U.N.-supervised balloting. Another 216 would be chosen on a geographic basis, thus allowing for perhaps 50 representatives from Kabul and other areas under Communist control. I have appended a copy of the Ghazi proposal to my testimony.

Contrary to the widespread image of a hopelessly polarized society, there is no shortage of respected, centrist Afghans who could form a government capable of commanding popular support. Former Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Samad Hamed, former Justice Minister Abdul Sitar Sirat, former Agriculture Minister Abdul Wakil and former Deputy Prime Minister Ali Ahmad Popal are examples of the many experienced Afghan leaders who are not tainted by fundamentalist extremism, past links with the Communists, or the corruption charges that have discredited most of the alliance leaders.

3. The projected appointment of an American special envoy to the Afghan resistance, Peter Tomsen, can serve a useful purpose in supporting the Secretary General's efforts if his role is properly defined. The Administration should make clear that he is not an ambassador to the Peshawar government in exile. As a special envoy to the resistance, he should maintain contact with

all non-Communist Afghans, including Zahir Shah, the field commanders, tribal, ethnic and religious leaders, "good Muslims," the Iran-based Shia groups and the Peshawar exile regime. To make clear that the Administration is not setting the stage for recognition of the Peshawar regime, he should be based in Washington, not Peshawar.

4. The American Ambassador to Pakistan should maintain a detached posture toward all non-Communist Afghan factions. Anti-Americanism is now growing among Afghan refugees in Pakistan, partly as a result of his high-profile attempts to mobilize support for the government-in-exile. The Ambassador's controversial visits in early May to Naser Bah and other refugee camps were marked by open appeals for support to the unpopular Peshawar regime.

5. The United States should gradually shift from its present policy of channeling humanitarian aid through the Peshawar exile government to a new policy more supportive of United Nations reconstruction coordinator Sadruddin Aga Khan. While the Soviet Union has pledged the equivalent of \$600 million in rouble and commodity aid to the U.N. effort, American aid contributions so far total only \$20 million. Additional American aid, roughly totalling \$100 million per year, is administered bilaterally and is routed through the Peshawar regime. The U.N. effort is realistically designed to meet grass-roots needs by working through local authorities, downgrading both the Kabul and Peshawar regimes.

III

Despite the withdrawal of Soviet forces, resistance factions had captured only six provincial capitals by June, 1989. To be sure, this is partly attributable to the fact that the Kabul regime has airpower, while the resistance forces do not. Another military factor responsible for the poor showing of the resistance forces in the Jalalabad assault so far has been their lack of experience in conventional warfare. Trained in hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, they are ill-prepared to face disciplined regular forces entrenched in fortified cities. As already noted, however, apart from military factors, the resistance is debilitated by ethnic, religious and personality rivalries, while the Communist forces, fighting for their survival, have submerged their internecine conflicts. More important, the resistance is paralyzed by a deep split over whether to pursue a military victory, with a high cost in suffering for fellow-Afghans, or to move toward a political compromise in Kabul while keeping up military pressure.

This split is reflected in the widespread antagonism on the part of the majority of non-communist Afghans toward the narrowly-based exile government established in the Pakistani-orchestrated shura at Islamabad in February, 1988. In order to understand this antagonism, it is necessary to recognize the nature of Islam in Afghanistan, where the established clergy has long been identified with the Hanafi school of Islamic law and

various Sufi sects. The power of the local mullah is reinforced by a symbiotic relationship with tribal chieftains. By contrast, the fundamentalist groups, preaching more purist Islamic doctrines, are seeking to destroy the tribal system as incompatible with their concept of a centralized Islamic state linked to a pan-Islamic revival. Rejecting Afghan nationalism, they argue that Islam knows no national borders. They oppose most of the modernization measures initiated by previous regimes, especially those liberalizing the status of women.

While the three non-fundamentalist resistance groups work closely with the Pushtun tribes, Afghanistan's dominant ethnic group, the Jamiat Islami, is rooted primarily in the Tajiks, an ethnic minority. The Hezbe-Islami embraces both Tajiks and detribalized Pushtuns from migrant families in northern Afghanistan no longer attached to the tribal structure. For this reason, despite the fact that the fundamentalists have received the lion's share of foreign aid, they do not have large territorial strongholds inside the country except in the Tajik-dominated Pansjer Valley, Herat and the Hazara region. Yunus Khalis, with Pushtun roots in Nangrahar and Paktia, is often described as a fundamentalist but is more accurately described as a centrist in the resistance spectrum.

Numbering at most 1,100 in the early 1970's, the Afghan fundamentalists faced severe repression under Zahir Shah and his successor, Mohammed Daud. In 1975, most of them fled to Pakistan. There they linked up with the Intelligence Directorate, staging

raids against the Daud regime then at odds with Pakistan. This link made them Pakistan's favored Afghan proteges after the 1978 communist takeover. Nurtured by massive aid from the U.S. as well as fundamentalists in the Middle East and Pakistan, the fundamentalist factions have grown to number some 15,000 hard-core activists.

In seeking to gauge fundamentalist strength it is necessary to bear in mind that the dominant Pushtuns are organized on a tribal basis. In Iran, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's power has rested on solid Shiite institutional foundations. Shiism requires the faithful to pay substantial taxes to the mosques, which has enabled the Islamic Republican Party in Iran to build grassroots political machines. By contrast, Sunni Islam is more loosely organized, and in predominantly Sunni Afghanistan religious leaders have little or no institutional base, though they enjoy widespread popular respect. Their status in the Pushtun areas depends on a cooperative relationship with the tribal maliks.

A mid-1987 random sample poll of Afghan refugees in Pakistan showed that Pakistan-based resistance leaders of all factions have been discredited by persistent reports of drug trafficking and black-marketing in American aid weapons. Out of 2,287 refugees polled in 106 out of 249 camps in Pakistan, 71.65 per cent wanted Zahir Shah to lead a postwar Afghan government. Individual resistance leaders polled one per cent or less. Now 75

and living in exile in Rome, the ex-king ruled for 40 years until a 1973 coup by Daud.

For many, the former king symbolizes a period of relative stability when Afghanistan enjoyed friendly relations with the Soviet Union. But deeply rooted historical animosities dating back to the monarchy are directly affecting the current effort to find a viable formula for a postwar government. The fundamentalist leaders, remembering Zahir Shah's repression, bitterly oppose any role for him in organizing or leading a new regime.

Pakistan has actively obstructed efforts by Zahir Shah's supporters to organize broad-based negotiations among Afghan factions that would pave the way for the peaceful replacement of the Communist regime. Since the war started, the former monarch and his closest advisers have consistently been denied visas to visit the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. Instead, Pakistan has treated the seven-party resistance alliance as the sole voice of non-communist Afghans.

The roots of Pakistan's hostility go back to the early nineteenth century, when the original Afghan state created in 1747 by the Pushtun tribes under Ahmad Shah Durrani embraced the Pushtun areas of what is now northwest Pakistan. Later, as part of the "Great Game," the British Raj annexed 40,000 square miles of Afghan territory between the Indus River and the Khyber Pass. It was adding insult to injury when the British imposed the

Durand Line in 1893, formalizing their conquest, and then proceeded to hand over their ill-gotten territorial gains and half the Pushtun population to the new Pakistani government in 1947. By dividing the Pushtuns, the British bequeathed an issue that has preoccupied Pushtun-dominated Afghan regimes ever since and has poisoned the relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

At various times, Zahir Shah's monarchy, Mohammed Daud's republic, and post-1978 communist governments in Kabul have all challenged Pakistan's right to rule over its Pushtun areas. Pakistan's approach to the Afghan war has been dominated by its desire to prevent the emergence of a unified, armed Pushtun force on its territory.

While the King has spurned overtures for a coalition government including formal Communist representation, he has been receptive to proposals for a coalition embracing selected "good Muslims" now serving as high officials in the Kabul regime. By contrast, the Administration is skeptical of all formulas for replacing the Communist regime peacefully. Such scenarios, it is argued, implicitly assume that the existing Kabul governmental infrastructure would be left in place, at least initially. In this view, the armed forces, police and intelligence services of the Communist regime must be militarily destroyed and uprooted or they will subvert any new government. It is necessary to "start from scratch," as President Reagan put it in a press conference on November 4, 1988, prompted by the November 3 U.N. General Assembly resolution.

IV

This view blithely ignores the fact that the Communist Party has a hard core of some 40,000 highly-motivated activists who see themselves as nationalists and modernizers carrying forward the abortive reform effort launched by King Amanullah from 1919 to 1929. On a visit to Kabul in 1984 and in continuing contacts with Communist leaders, I have been reminded that dedication and a patriotic self-image are not a monopoly of the resistance fighters. The taint of Pakistani sponsorship now attaching to the Peshawar exile regime has reinforced this patriotic self-image and enabled the Communists to rationalize their own record of a decade of collaboration with Soviet occupation forces. Many party activists are drawn from previously-submerged social groups, including women. They will not easily give up their new status and are likely to continue to stand and fight rather than abandon the field to the resistance.

While the Communist Party cannot be wished away in a postwar Afghanistan, it clearly cannot have more than a token role in an interim regime and is not likely to win more than token representation in any future elections. Just as the United States should not seek to exclude all Communist participation in the processes leading to an interim regime, so the Soviet Union should be prepared to support processes that would, by their nature, consign the Communists to clear minority status. The

proposal by Sultan Ghazi cited earlier envisages perhaps 50 out of 871 seats in a Loi Jirga for the Communists or "good Muslims" from Kabul and other Communist-controlled areas. This would clearly prevent more than a token role for Communist-backed candidates in an interim regime. Moscow should be prepared to insist that the Najibullah regime hand over power to an interim government if it is chosen through processes based on equitable representation. By the same token, for Washington to expect Najibullah to step down before a broad-based successor government has been chosen is extremely unrealistic.

To be sure, the task of reshaping the armed forces, police and intelligence services inherited from the Najibullah regime would not be an easy one. But the leadership of a successor regime would be fortified by its control of American, West European, U.N. and Soviet aid resources. Communist discipline is not likely to survive for long within the security services in the midst of the political realignments that would accompany a broad-based regime. As the memory of the Soviet occupation fades, Afghan nationalism is certain to reassert itself, gradually diluting and domesticating Afghan Communism.

In my view, a policy designed to "start from scratch" in Afghanistan carries unacceptable moral as well as political costs. Such a policy is, in effect, a policy of "fighting to the last Afghan" in the misguided pursuit of perceived American geopolitical objectives that can be achieved more effectively through political and diplomatic means.

APPENDIX

Reflections on possible composition of a Loya Jirgah

Sultan M. Ghazi *

The best way to resolve the overwhelming national difficulties of Afghanistan is to hold national elections in which all of the people of Afghanistan could participate directly and through secret balloting. However, the present situation in the country does not lend itself to holding such elections. Moreover, the country is fragmented into many parts which are controlled by different factions and forces. It would therefore be impossible to gather the people and conduct national elections in the manner described above, since it is entirely likely that the voters would be coerced by the Kabul regime, the mujahideen organizations or the commanders under whom they serve into voting along lines dictated to them. In other words, they would not be in a position to cast their votes freely and according to their own wishes.

However, an alternative does exist which would reflect to a large degree the real wishes of people of Afghanistan. That alternative would be to convene the traditional Afghan Loya Jirgah (Grand National Assembly). This mechanism has been used successfully by the Afghans throughout their history to resolve issues of national importance.

The composition of this Assembly would, as in the past, depend on the conditions prevailing at the time it is convened. Past Assemblies have consisted of the Woloswali (the smallest administrative civil unit in Afghanistan), tribal chiefs, religious leaders, the intelligentsia and others. At the present

time, however, important new elements have come into being as a result of the war. Their importance must, therefore, be fully taken into consideration, and they must be included in the configuration of the assembly when it is convened.

In the past, the Assemblies were convened by the Head of State.

Who should convene this body in the present circumstances?

The convening of the Assembly by the Kabul regime is not acceptable to the majority of the people of Afghanistan and, even if the Kabul regime were prepared to convene this body, the people of Afghanistan would not participate in it.

The majority of the mujahideen organizations which symbolize the Afghan resistance in the eyes of the countries of the world have not thus far been prepared to convene the Assembly. It is even likely that some of them prefer the situation to remain as it is at the present; in other words, for the Assembly not to be convened.

Although the former King of Afghanistan enjoys wide popularity among his compatriots, he has not up to the present allowed himself to convene the Jirgah on his own initiative. Nevertheless, he has repeatedly stated that, if the mujahideen organizations were to convene the Assembly or if they were to support the convening of that body, he too would support their initiative.

What is the way out of this quagmire?

If the majority of the mujahideen organizations do not wish to convene the Assembly, and if there is no other practical and acceptable way out of the present difficulties, a meeting should be held under the auspices of the United Nations in which fifty to sixty Afghans would participate. These Afghans would be drawn from different elements of Afghan society and would include the mujahideen organizations, well-known field commanders, high ranking officials of good repute, some religious leaders, as well as some members of the intelligentsia. Such a meeting could be convened in Geneva. After having reviewed the present situation in Afghanistan, it could adopt measures aimed at preventing civil war and fratricide. It would be of the greatest importance that the decisions adopted by the meeting be implemented without delay for the simple reason that no political vacuum must be allowed to develop in Afghanistan in the wake of the final withdrawal of Soviet forces from the country; if such a political void is allowed to develop a most dangerous situation will arise from it.

If the meeting should decide to convene the Assembly, it could also address the question of its composition, time, place and number of participants at the same time.

Composition of the Assembly: Different views exist as to the basis for the composition of the Assembly. This paper will present a proposal for a broad-based Assembly, representative of all Afghans, indicating the number of participants for each category to be represented.

Composition based on numbers of participants:

One person from each Woloswali (smallest administrative civil unit of Afghanistan)	216
Representatives from nine mujahideen organizations	
The leader and two members of the executive council of each organization (The seven Peshawar-based organizations and the two Shiite organizations based in Iran and Afghanistan)	27
The leading field commanders who are bonafide and actually in command of fighting units, to be selected by the nine mujahideen organizations without reference to geographic representation.	216
Representatives of the refugees in Pakistan (one representative for approximately every 30,000 refugees; they would be elected on the basis of secret ballot and under U.N. supervision	
Representatives of the Afghan refugees in Iran (designated on the basis of the conditions applicable to the designation of Afghan refugees in Pakistan)	50
Representatives of the Afghan refugees in the USA (elected by Afghan refugees residing in USA)	10
Representatives of Afghan refugees residing in F.R.G., India, Saudi Arabia and Australia; Five persons per country (elected along lines applicable to US-based Afghan refugees ..	20
Representatives of Afghan refugees in Turkey (including representatives of the Kirghiz residing in that country).....	5

Representatives of Afghan refugees in France, U.K., Canada, Kuwait, U.A.E., and Switzerland on the basis of three persons from each country (designated along lines applicable to US-based refugees)..... 18

Austria, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Belgium and Holland:	
one person per country; (elected along lines applicable to US-based Afghan refugees)	6
Kabul City	10
Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kunduz:	
five people per place	25
Faizabad, Andkoi, Ghazni, Khost, Girishk and Farah	
one representative per place	6
Intelligentsia and religious leaders (Sunni and Shiite) ..	27
Intellectuals and scholars	27
High ranking civil and military officials of good repute	27
Commanders not connected with the mujahideen organizations and who fight for the country independently of those organizations	27
Representatives of the heroic women of Afghanistan	27
Kabul regime PDPA	27

Duties of the Assembly:

Designation of one person as the leader (Head of State) from among the candidates;

The approval of the Head of Government after the Head of State has designated and introduced him;

The approval of the Government which will be presented by the Head of Government with the consent of the Head of State.

The election of a national parliament from among the membership of the Assembly (about 30 people) until the two chambers of Parliament have been established.

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